



Durga Puja Special

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Durga Puja : A Celebration of Faith, Art, and Community

As the first notes of the conch shell echo through the autumn sky and the fragrance of shiuli flowers drifts in the breeze, Bengal and its diaspora around the world prepare for the grandest carnival of devotion—Durga Puja. For five days, cities transform into glowing temples, streets become rivers of humanity, and hearts beat in unison with the rhythm of the dhak. Yet Durga Puja is not merely a religious observance. It is an experience woven from faith, artistry, nostalgia, and the timeless desire for togetherness.

Kamalika Debnath

The Story of Homecoming

According to mythology, Goddess Durga leaves her heavenly abode in Kailash to visit her parents on earth, accompanied by her children—Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik, and Ganesha. This homecoming is symbolic of warmth, reunion, and maternal love. In Bengal, the story finds a parallel in every family reunion. Sons and daughters working in distant cities book their tickets months in advance. For them, Mahalaya—the day that marks the Goddess’s journey—is also the countdown to return home.

Artistry That Shapes Divinity

What makes Durga Puja unique is the craftsmanship that goes into it. In the lanes of Kumartuli in Kolkata, artisans spend months breathing life into clay. Each idol is sculpted not just with hands but with heart, carrying within it centuries of tradition. The process begins with straw structures, layered carefully with clay from the sacred Ganges, symbolizing purity. The final stroke of painting the Goddess’s eyes, Chokkhu Daan, is considered so sacred that the moment is often performed in silence, with

prayers on every lip. But Puja is not static. Each year, themes change and creativity soars. Pandals are no longer just bamboo and cloth structures; they are architectural wonders, ranging from replicas of world monuments to abstract art installations. One year, visitors may walk into a pandal shaped like a Buddhist monastery; another year, into a futuristic glass dome with eco-friendly solar lighting. Through these designs, committees tell stories—of climate change, women’s empowerment, or local heritage. Art and devotion walk hand in hand, creating a gallery of imagination under the open sky.

Beyond Religion: A Social Festival

Though rooted in Hindu mythology, Durga Puja has always transcended religious boundaries. In Bengal, it is not unusual to find Muslim craftsmen building idols, Christian volunteers organizing food stalls, and neighbors of all faiths enjoying cultural programs together. In that sense, Puja is more than a religious festival—it is a celebration of humanity. Every evening, cultural performances are held in pandals—plays, recitations, dance, and music that highlight Bengal’s literary and artistic heritage. Rabindranath Tagore’s

songs echo alongside modern rock bands, proving that the festival bridges tradition and modernity seamlessly. For children, it is a time of rehearsals and performances; for elders, it is a chance to pass on cultural values to the next generation.

Economic Lifeline

Durga Puja is also an economic engine. Small traders, artisans, light decorators, transporters, sweet makers, and countless others depend on these days for their annual earnings. According to recent estimates, the festival contributes thousands of crores to Bengal’s economy. Saree shops run late into the night, eateries prepare mountains of delicacies, and street hawkers sell everything from balloons to trinkets. The festival gives work to many who otherwise struggle for steady



income, making it not just a cultural but also a financial lifeline.

Food, Fashion, and Festivity

Puja is incomplete without food. From the humble khichuri bhog served with labra and chutney in pandals to elaborate restaurant feasts, every plate carries a memory. The aroma of fried luchis, the sweetness of rasgullas, and the spice of rolls and chowmein sold at street corners—these flavors define Puja as much as the rituals. Families often plan “food trails,” hopping from pandal to pandal while tasting delicacies. Fashion, too, takes center stage. Women drape new sarees every day—often traditional cottons in the morning and shimmering silks in the evening. Men wear crisp kurta or stylish shirts. The streets turn into a moving ramp show, where tradition and trend fuse effortlessly.

UNESCO Recognition and Global Identity

In 2021, UNESCO recognized Durga Puja as an “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.” This honor validated what Bengalis had always known—the festival is not just a ritual but a living, evolving culture. For Bengalis abroad, from New Jersey to London, the recognition was a source of pride. Across continents, Puja associations recreate the

magic with smaller idols, cultural programs, and traditional meals. Though scaled down, the spirit remains unchanged: a sense of belonging that connects them to their roots.

The Emotional Farewell

No matter how joyous the celebration, Durga Puja ends with a tinge of sorrow. On Dashami, married women smear vermilion in Sindoor Khela, a ritual of blessings and sisterhood. Then comes the immersion, where idols are carried to rivers and lakes. Tears mingle with chants of “Bolo Durga Mai Ki Jai” and the hopeful cry “Asche bochor abar hobe”—next year, she will return. This cycle of arrival and departure mirrors life itself—joy, loss, and renewal.

A Festival of Unity

Durga Puja has always symbolized the triumph of good over evil, but its deeper meaning lies in unity. It brings together people across class, creed, and generation. It gives voice to artists, livelihood to workers, joy to children, and nostalgia to elders. It is where faith meets festivity, and where community spirit shines brighter than any light decoration.

Durga Puja is not just a festival of Bengal; it is the festival of life itself. In its essence lies a universal truth—that hope returns, that joy can be collective, and that tradition can be the foundation for creativity. For five days, the world sees Bengal not merely as a place on the map but as a pulsating heartbeat of devotion and culture. And as the Goddess departs, leaving behind memories and promises, every Bengali whispers the same words: “Asche bochor abar hobe.”

When Dubai comes alive in Kumarghat

Ashutosh Paul

As autumn drapes Tripura in its golden light, the familiar pulse of drums and scent of dhuno signal the approach of Durga Puja—the most awaited celebration of the

year. The state is already in the grip of festive fever, and in Kumarghat, a small town in Unakoti district, the excitement has reached a crescendo. This year, the talk of the town is a pandal that promises to transport visitors

thousands of miles away—straight into the heart of Dubai. At the centre of all this anticipation is Subhash Sangha, a name synonymous with grandeur and imagination. Now in its 47th year, the club is setting new

benchmarks with a ₹35 lakh celebration that blends art, devotion and spectacle. Their chosen theme is nothing less than breathtaking: a recreation of Dubai’s world-famous Miracle Garden.

“We wanted to offer something magical—a space where faith and fantasy meet,” says Champan Deb Roy, secretary of Subhash Sangha. Master artisans from Nabadwip have been working tirelessly for weeks, shaping every detail of the floral wonderland—from ornate petals and cascading blooms to intricate lighting that will bathe the town in a dreamlike glow.

But the spectacle is not limited to the exterior. The heart of the pandal carries a deeper message drawn from the Mahabharata—the moment when Lord Krishna guides Arjuna on the eternal struggle of dharma over adharma. Renowned clay artist Rosaraj Pal is sculpting the idols, blending mythological gravitas with artistic finesse.

And the celebration isn’t just about devotion and design. Beside the pandal, a vibrant fair will spring to life, buzzing with food stalls, music, and traditional games. Organisers are preparing for a daily influx of visitors—not just from across Tripura, but from neighbouring states too. Yet, what sets Subhash Sangha apart is its commitment to community beyond the festive season. The club’s annual calendar includes blood donation camps, tree plantation drives, and other social initiatives that make their puja more than just a spectacle—it is also a celebration of service. The grand floral marvel will open its gates on Panchami evening. As workers race to add final touches and the town hums with anticipation, one thing is certain: this Durga Puja, Kumarghat will bloom like never before. And for the thousands who will walk through its gates, a slice of Dubai will blossom right here in Tripura’s heartland.

Sri Sarada Devi The Divine Mother in Human Form

Swami Sunischananda

In the form of the Devi Durga, the Mother of the universe has manifested herself in the arena of human life since eternity—sometimes as the Mother of the world, sometimes as a daughter—unfolding various aspects of Her infinite play within the hearts of devotees. At times She has revealed herself as the embodiment of maternal love, at other times in the form of womanhood itself, and as the Supreme Goddess she has been adored as Tripurasundari, Rajrajeshwari, Lalita Bala, and by many other names and forms. The worship of Sri Vidya through the Sri Yantra, established by Sri Shankaracharya in the four monasteries, continues to this day. In the Mahabharata (Shanti Parva 260/26–27), it is said: “He who attains the Mother becomes sheltered, and he who does not becomes like an orphan.” She is the source of creation; She is the seat of happiness for all. Where She dwells, none is overcome by grief. Those who have lost their mothers alone understand that when a man is deprived of his mother, he feels overcome with sorrow, and experiences the world as empty. There is no refuge, no protector, and no beloved comparable to the Mother in this world. She nourishes as Dhātṛī, She is Jananī as She gives birth, and She is addressed as Virasu, having borne strong sons (Shanti Parva 260/30–32). Woman is a mystery in the world—even the gods are bewildered as to what she truly is. In the Chandī it is stated: “Strīyah samastāh sakalā jagatsu”—all women are

forms of the Divine Mother. In this age, both Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda realized and proclaimed that without the awakening of women, no real progress would come. Sri Ramakrishna, through the worship of his consort, Sarada Devi as the embodiment of both Saraswati and the Divine Mother, awakened the spirit of motherhood within womanhood. In this age of Ramakrishna and Holy Mother Sarada Devi, lives must be moulded after that ideal. Sarada Devi stands as the exemplar for womanhood, showing how life can be built up from within the household itself, establishing the ideal for future generations of women. Holy Mother Sarada Devi was the union of the divine and the human. Thakur himself declared: “She is Sarada - Saraswati, she has come to bestow knowledge.” Concerning her own nature, she said: “What am I indeed? I am but a human being, though people call me Kali. Had it been otherwise, I would have lived beside Narayana as Lakshmi. If one were always conscious of one’s divine nature, could these worldly duties be carried out, my child? But whenever I wish, I feel the stirrings of inspiration within. Yet, at other

times, thoughts of the household come and I forget.” After the passing of Thakur, nothing in worldly life pleased her. Her heart was restless, and she prayed: “What is to become of me in this world?” At that moment she saw before her a small girl, clad in red, circling about. Thakur appeared and said: “Take shelter in her.” Some days later, she saw her niece-in-law, then suffering from insanity, wandering about with a ragged quilt, while her little daughter Radhu followed behind her, weeping. Holy Mother’s heart overflowed with compassion; she clasped the child to her lap. Soon Thakur appeared again and said: “Take care of this girl—she is Yogamaya.” Later, after Holy Mother’s own passing, Radhu too passed away in 1940 at the age of forty. Thus Radhu, in her way,

revealed the divine-human nature of the Holy Mother. Once Holy Mother, pointing to her own body, said: “See, this body is itself Shasthi, Shitala, Tara—they are all but parts of me. Could an ordinary human endure so much if not for the Lord? Upon whom my grace does not rest is truly unfortunate. Often I am so carried away by compassion that I forget who I am.” In truth, she was the living embodiment of forgiveness and renunciation—the image of the Divine in human form. On one occasion, when a devotee had caused her pain, she prayed: “Thakur, take not his offense upon him.” And, while blessing the devotee, she remarked: “This body—Thakur never once uttered a word of rebuke to it. Do you understand where my place is?” To her nephew she once said: “This household of yours has received its share. Sri Rama once said to Kausalya: ‘Mother, in your womb no more shall I be born again.’ Father was a great devotee, and mother was embodiment of compassion, and through their merit I have taken birth in this house. While I live, none will know my true nature. After I depart, then you will understand. Did the cowherd boys know who Sri Krishna was when they played with him? Only after his passing did they realize.” A devotee once narrated that after Swami Vivekananda’s return from America, he followed him for three years, seeking

initiation and the monastic life. Eventually, on the day of initiation, Swamiji initiated one disciple after another, and when the devotee approached at last, Swamiji said: “Thakur has said, I am not your Guru. The one who will initiate you is greater than I. You must not despair—when the time comes, it shall be done.” Hearing this, the devotee was disheartened. Later that very night he saw in a vision a radiant divine form before him, who imparted a mantra and said: “I am Saraswati.” The mantra and its method of repetition were shown, and he was commanded to repeat it at least 108 times a day. That form was none other than Sri Sarada Devi herself. From America, Swami Vivekananda once wrote to his brother-disciple Swami Shivananda regarding the mother of Swami Premananda: “Baburam’s mother has lost her wit with age - leaving the living Durga aside, she is worshipping the clay image of Durga!” Believe me, one day I shall show you the worship of the living Durga. Do all you can to arrange funds, so that we may celebrate this Durga festival. Girish Ghosh has worshipped the Mother greatly. Fortunate indeed is that family! I remember always that my true place lies in the Mother. Ramakrishna Paramahansa has gone—I fear not, for Mother’s grace alone upholds me. In America and Europe, people worship the Mother unknowingly through passion. Yet those who worship her in purity and devotion, will not they attain welfare? My eyes are opening day by day.” Victory to the Mother! Her grace alone is all.



Durga Temple, glory of more than Five Hundred Years

Indrajit Chanda

The worship of Goddess Durga—today, speaking about this worship is not to create any debate or to point out mistakes. Here, I wish to discuss something meaningful that needs to be known—today’s topic is a fresh perspective.

Beyond India, Across the World

The worship is not confined to us alone; in many countries outside India, Durga Puja is also celebrated. It is widely acknowledged as a universal festival. Every year, these discussions happen in detail. But this time, let’s talk about something truly unique—Bishnupur’s “Durga Puja.” This is a subject of great wonder for many brothers and sisters, holding a special place in the traditions of worship.

The Ten-Armed Mother Durga

We all know Mother Durga’s image with ten arms. In most places, we imagine the ten-armed Durga. We celebrate and do business under her blessings, but everyone thinks of the ten-armed goddess. Some people may forget that in some places, the goddess has appeared differently. That tradition began in Rajpur under the royal family of Bishnupur. Let us share this special fact today—why and how the worship of a two-armed Durga began. Two-armed Durga is unique in her form. To understand how this happened, let us revisit history and the faith of countless devotees.

History and a Popular Legend

There is a historical story about this—regarding Maharaja Krishnakishore Mallik and his wife, Maharani Sulakshmi Devi. Let us hear this story.

The Story Goes Like This

During the royal worship of Tripura’s Rajpur estate, Maharani Sulakshmi Devi once saw a vision of a two-armed goddess. She was so overwhelmed that she fainted. Later, Goddess Durga revealed to the Maharani that from then on, worship should be performed with a two-armed idol. From that day onward, in Bishnupur, Durga has been worshipped in her two-armed form—a tradition that continues even today, while elsewhere, Durga retains her familiar ten-armed appearance.

A Historical Vision Fulfilled by the Maharani

After regaining consciousness from her divine vision, Maharani Sulakshmi Devi conveyed the goddess’s message to Maharaja Krishnakishore Mallik. The king, astonished, gathered his priests and informed them of the goddess’s wish. From that day, they began worshipping Durga in her two-armed form, and this unique custom became a cherished

tradition in Rajpur’s royal family.

The Goddess Appears in a Dream

Among the devout, Maharani Sulakshmi Devi’s vision was regarded as sacred. From



that very year, the worship of the two-armed Durga began.

The Beginning of a Historical Tradition

Every year, the Durga Puja at Rajpur, started by Maharaja Krishnakishore Mallik, continues to worship Durga in her two-armed form. Over time, this has become a rare and cherished heritage of Tripura, a source of immense devotion for the local people and a testimony to an extraordinary tradition. Here’s the English translation of the Bengali text in the image:

Present Condition

These two-handed goddess Durga idols further enrich Tripura’s heritage. Tripura’s Durga Puja is already a major attraction, drawing visitors from across the country and abroad. This is one of the oldest Durga Pujas in Tripura, which has been worshipped continuously since the time of the princely state. The royal Durga Bari temple in Agartala and its school are still present today.

Another Story, Another Belief – Mythical Dream

It is said that King Manikya once saw in a dream that the goddess should be worshipped in the form of a two-handed idol. And since then, two-handed Durga idols have been worshipped. This tradition was later adopted at Durga Bari and other temples. This system continues even today.

Unique Fact and Incomplete Situation

This Durga is considered the sole goddess of Tripura. Her worship has not been preserved as a mere historical relic but continues in a

unique form.

National Heritage:

This unique tradition is not only an integral part of Tripura’s culture but is also associated with the national heritage (Rashtriya Salami), which has been continuing for over 500 years.

History of the Puja

Durga Bari’s puja was organized within the royal palace. That is, when Durga Puja began, the Maharaja himself participated in the worship. Over time, the palace priests began to organize the puja at this temple. Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya introduced some reforms in its management. Later, during Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya’s reign, Durga Bari temple was

given special importance by the royal family of Tripura. Even today, the Maharaja’s descendants preserve these traditions.

Maharaja’s Generous Charity

Generous charity was a hallmark of the Maharajas. It is said that with the beginning of this festival, the Raja would stop eating non-vegetarian food. Until the immersion, the goddess was worshiped with utmost devotion. The Maharajas used to distribute food to the poor during Durga Puja. Even today, the royal family bears most of the expenses for Tripura’s Durga Puja. Historically, the Tripura royal family sponsored Durga Puja in different parts of Tripura. Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya used to visit various puja mandaps to observe the festivities and sometimes provided financial aid. The kings used to provide gold coins and gifts to the artists. Their generous charity is still remembered today. Even now, Durga Bari continues to receive government assistance to preserve this rich tradition.



Kolkata is at its most Soulful during Puja

Aritra Sarkar

Across pandals and riverbanks, strangers become neighbours and the city remembers its togetherness

Durga Puja in Kolkata is less a festival and more a collective heartbeat, pulsing through every lane, bazaar, and courtyard of the city. To describe it is to attempt to capture joy in motion, for it is everywhere—in the hands of artisans, in the eyes of children, in the weary but smiling faces of vendors, in the photographs of tourists who cannot believe what they are witnessing.

For the artisans of Kumartuli, Puja begins months before the first drumbeat of the dhaak. In narrow workshops along the Hooghly, clay from the river is shaped into the ten-armed goddess. A sculptor named Bimal once told me, “We do not just make idols. We give the city its mother.” His fingers, caked in

clay, caressed the face of an unfinished Durga as if it were his own child. For artisans like him, the Puja is both livelihood and prayer, a union of survival and devotion. Across the city, markets are transformed into rivers of humanity. Gariahat glows with sequined saris, New Market bursts with perfumes and handbags, and tiny stalls in Hatibagan spill over with bangles and imitation jewelry. I remember overhearing a teenage girl haggling with a shopkeeper for a pair of sandals. The shopkeeper, tired from twelve hours of bargaining, laughed and said, “Didi, you’ll become finance minister one day!” In that single exchange, Puja revealed itself not as consumption, but as theatre—where joy is measured as much in banter as in purchase.

For the food vendors, Puja nights are both exhausting and exhilarating. Outside Maddox Square, a roll seller named Arif flips parathas till dawn. His stall becomes a makeshift adda, where strangers bond over chicken rolls and bottles of Thums Up. “I sell more in these five days than in two months,” he says, his voice hoarse but proud. For him, the Puja is not merely commerce—it is community, woven through the smoky threads of his tawa. Tourists, too, become part of this theatre. They follow the glowing pandals, moving from Shakespeare Sarani to Shobhabazar like pilgrims of spectacle. A French visitor once confessed to me, “In Paris, we have art in museums. Here, the entire city is a museum, but alive.” Indeed, the pandals are epics in bamboo and cloth—one year a replica of the Ajanta caves, another year a meditation on climate change—ephemeral marvels dismantled as soon as the goddess departs.

And in all this colour and clamour lies perhaps Puja’s most enduring gift: its power to dissolve barriers.

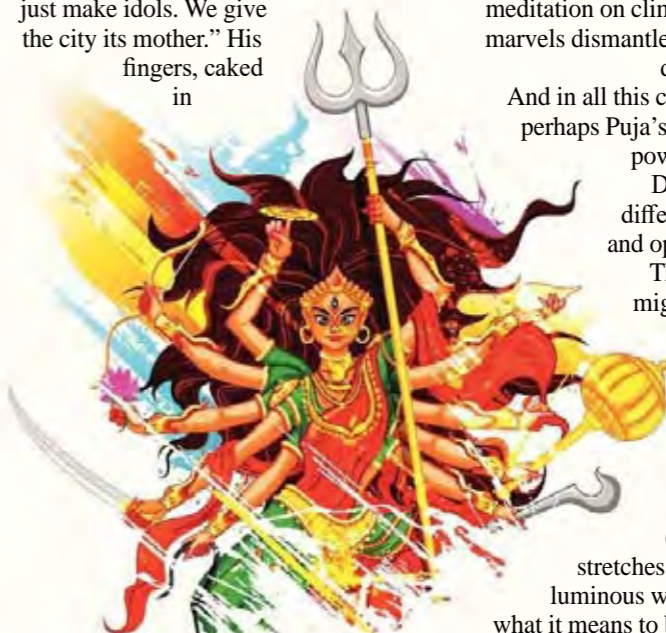
During these five days, differences of class, religion, and opinion are quietly buried. The millionaire and the migrant worker wait in the same queue for bhog.

The Muslim dhaaki sets the rhythm to which the idol is welcomed. Neighbours who may have quarreled over water or politics embrace in an adda that stretches past midnight. For one

luminous week, the city remembers what it means to belong—not as separate individuals, but as one vast community, bound by an atmosphere of camaraderie that is rare in our fractured times.

Yet, at the heart of it all is the people’s Puja. It is the security guard who takes his daughter pandal-hopping after night shift. It is the old woman on her balcony, watching dhaakis with tears of memory in her eyes. It is the groups of young men in identical T-shirts who raise money all year to stage a neighbourhood puja. It is every Kolkatan, caught in the paradox of exhaustion and elation, who knows that the city is never more itself than during these five days.

Durga Puja is Kolkata’s greatest act of togetherness. For some, it is faith. For others, it is commerce. For many, it is both. But above all, it is a reminder that joy, when shared, becomes something larger than life—something eternal.



Sharad Utsav-2025

THUS SPAKE THE CELEBRITIES

Speaking to **Avishikta Lodh**, Bibi Russell, a renowned Bangladeshi fashion designer, emphasizes fashion rooted in culture, empowering artisans through her "Fashion for Development" movement. She draws inspiration from Durga Puja's vibrancy and North East traditions, advocating for handlooms like Dhonekhali weaves. Actor **Debraj Bhattacharya** cherishes Puja's familial essence, lamenting its commercialization, while singer **Swapnil Shojib** sees Puja as a spiritual celebration, performing Tagore's music globally. Actress **Darshana Banik** embraces sustainable sarees, favoring timeless style. **Arijit Dutta** reflects on Puja's past simplicity, now overshadowed by crowds and commercialization, yet values its inclusivity, highlighting its significance for Bengali cinema.



Bibi Russell on Fashion & Puja



Celebrated Bangladeshi fashion designer Bibi Russell, known globally for her movement "Fashion for Development," believes fashion must remain rooted in culture and should empower local craftsmen. In an exclusive pre-Puja conversation with Tripura Times, she reflected on her personal bond with Durga Puja and the inspirations she draws from the festival and the North East.

Russell, a graduate of London College of Fashion, chose to return home to uplift artisans through her brand, Bibi Productions. She shared that Durga Puja, like Eid, has always been close to her heart, recalling how she spent time with weavers in Tangail during festivals. For her, villages keep traditions alive, from the colours of sarees to community celebrations, which continue to inspire her designs.

Speaking on Puja's cultural influence, Russell highlighted the vibrancy of the North East. "The region is full of colours, culture and music. Women's attire here is very distinctive and attractive," she said, noting how festive traditions such as Sindoor Khela, sweets like Sandesh, and the grandeur of Puja mandaps influence her creative work.

She emphasised Puja as an opportunity to spotlight local handicrafts, citing her recent work to revive the Dhonekhali weave in West Bengal. She urged people to dedicate at least five percent of their Puja wardrobe to handlooms, pointing out the richness of regional fabrics.

On ideal fashion, Russell stressed integrating tradition with confidence. "I always try to wear handmade products. If you know culture and tradition, diversification becomes easier," she explained, giving the example of her Gamcha, reinvented as a fashionable scarf.

For young designers, Russell's message was clear: respect heritage while developing a unique identity. "Designers should have their handwriting, just like singers have their own voices. Simplicity rooted in culture can resonate worldwide."

Darshana Banik on colour, tradition

Darshana Banik, one of the rising stars of Bengali cinema, spoke about her love for sarees, timeless style, and sustainable fashion in an exclusive conversation with Tripura Times ahead of Durga Puja. Known for films like Asehhe Abar Shabor, Aami Ashbo Phirey, and Telugu and Hindi projects including Dybbuk, Darshana said Puja for her is an emotion tied to colour, tradition, and celebration. Sharing her festive choices, she said bright shades dominate her wardrobe, with sarees and Indian attire being her favourites. Jewellery, she added, is always part of her look.

While fusion trends often appear in Puja fashion, Darshana describes herself as "old-school," preferring timeless grace of sarees and salwars. On this year's trends, she predicted cotton and mulmul sarees would dominate Kolkata's Puja fashion, being both affordable and comfortable for long hours of pandal hopping. Her advice to youngsters was practical: "Pick your shoes wisely. Comfort comes first if you want to enjoy without stress." A strong supporter of sustainable style, Darshana said she consciously chooses handloom weaves. "I believe in being vocal for local. Many of my sarees are curated directly from weavers. Supporting them preserves our heritage and adds meaning to my festive wardrobe."

Balancing glamour with comfort, and elegance with responsibility, Darshana's Puja fashion reflects the very essence of the festival—vibrant, traditional, and deeply rooted in cultural pride.



Debraj Bhattacharya on Puja celebration



Actor and singer Debraj Bhattacharya, widely admired for his sharp comic timing and versatility, spoke candidly about his Durga Puja memories, cultural reflections and his connection with the North East in an exclusive conversation with Tripura Times.

Debraj recalled his childhood in Bongaon, where Durga Puja was a grand joint family affair at their ancestral home. Idols were brought in, his uncle played the dhak, and cousins gathered in celebration. Though the joint family tradition has since faded, his father continues the legacy, and Debraj still spends the Puja days with loved ones at Bongaon.

Despite his busy career, he ensures he is home from Sasthi to Dashami. For him, the most essential part of Puja is adda with friends rather than pandal hopping, which he avoids due to the crowds. He believes Puja brings people together at a time when social media often isolates them. On fashion, Debraj admits he no longer plans much, though the family ritual of wearing Dhuti-Panjabi on Ashtami remains unchanged.

On the cultural side, he feels Puja has been exploited with noise and over-amplified sound systems, overshadowing its true essence. He noted that Puja is also a commercial opportunity, with films and albums strategically released during the season. His band, Hooliganism, is releasing a Puja song this year, reflecting their commitment to keeping the cultural spirit alive.

Discussing the state of Bengal, Debraj expressed concern over what he called a phase of political and intellectual decline. He said Bengalis were once flexible and open to cultural exchange, citing Tagore's influence from Western classical music. Today, however, public movements are reduced to social media posts, and confusion has crept into society.

Born in Shillong and raised across the North East, Debraj holds deep ties to the region, including relatives in Tripura. His Puja message was clear: Bengalis must stay rooted in their heritage, remain open to cultural exchange, and continue celebrating diversity against rising communal divides.

Arijit Dutta on Puja: Past & present

Arijit Dutta, owner of Priya Cinemas and son of the late cultural icon Purnima Datta, offers a reflective and personal account of Durga Puja, contrasting the simplicity of the past with the challenges of the present. Having spent much of his childhood in a boarding school, he missed the family-oriented experiences of Puja that many cherish, and his first real memories of the festival began only in the 1980s. Those days, he recalls, were marked by ease and joy — hopping across pandals by car without the overwhelming crowds and barricades that define the Puja of today.

For Dutta, the transformation of the festival has been dramatic. What was once a smooth experience has now become an ordeal, with traffic restrictions and endless walking making it less enjoyable. He admits to avoiding Kolkata during Puja in recent years, choosing instead to travel, as stepping out of home during the festive days has become increasingly difficult.

He reflects that while Durga Puja continues to be an important season for the film industry, with packed halls and major releases, the logistical hurdles faced by cinema-goers temper the excitement. Priya Cinemas, long



considered an emotion for Bengalis, still witnesses electrifying crowds during Puja, but Dutta is nostalgic for a time when people could move freely and visit several pandals in one night without stress. Fashion, too, has undergone a shift. He recalls how a single film trend, such as Mithun Chakraborty's yellow shirt and black trousers, could define an entire

Swapnil Shojib on 'away from Desher Mati'



Celebrated Rabindra Sangeet singer Swapnil Shojib, also an actor and presenter, described music and Durga Puja as inseparable in his life, calling the festival a spiritual experience rooted in divine grace. Speaking exclusively to Tripura Times from the United States, where he is performing this Puja season for the first time, Shojib shared his memories, inspirations and journey with music.

Born in Faridpur, Bangladesh, Shojib grew up celebrating Puja with friends and family, later performing in Kolkata and Delhi. This year, he is performing in New York's Times Square, Atlanta, Florida and Washington DC, where he says community Pujas are more modest as people don't get holidays. Still, he feels deeply connected to the festival.

On Puja music, Shojib highlighted Tagore's compositions like "Dan Haate Kharga Jawale," "Aj Bangladesher Hridoy Theke," and "Basanti He Bhubanmohini" as powerful invocations of the divine feminine. He explained that from Mahalaya onwards, the rhythms of dhak awaken spirituality and create a festive bond, even for the diaspora. Gradually, his repertoire expanded from Rabindra Sangeet to Mahisasur Mardini and devotional pieces like "Aiagiri Nandini" and "Jayanti Mangala Kali," which he performs worldwide as cultural expressions of Bengal.

For him, favourites like "Ogo Amar Agamani Alo," "Ekla Cholar Kotha," and folk pieces such as "Mayer Payer Jaba" carry the season's devotion, along with Kirtans by Bhaba Pagla. Though his schedule keeps him busy, he treasures small moments—his mother's festive cooking, addas with friends, and now inviting loved ones to his shows. He also runs a foundation for underprivileged children, which he says keeps him grounded amidst fame.

Shojib reflected on Puja's philosophy, saying Maa Durga symbolises strength against every form of darkness, whether social, natural or personal. "She is always with us. The rituals remind us of her eternal presence," he said, adding that through music, he seeks to share this divine grace with audiences across the globe.

Puja season. Today, he notes, the styles are more global and utilitarian, with T-shirts, trousers, and designer wear taking precedence, while traditional dhuti-panjabi remains more of a symbolic gesture than a practical choice for pandal-hopping.

For him personally, style during Puja has little significance as he prefers to avoid the crowded streets altogether.

Speaking as both an actor and cinema hall owner, he highlights the deep link between Durga Puja and the film industry, with festival bonuses and holidays drawing people to theatres, especially for Bengali films. The Puja window remains the most competitive and rewarding for filmmakers, with a clear spike in collections.

Despite the inconveniences, Dutta values Durga Puja for its inclusivity, describing it as a carnival where people from all religions and walks of life come together. To him, the festival represents humanity at its best, even if it brings collateral challenges such as congestion. His message to the younger generation is to carry forward this unifying spirit, while recognising the need to spread the celebrations to ease the overwhelming crowds.

Goddess Durga, the Destroyer of Calamities

Rupam Chakraborty

Durga is so called because she destroys the calamities (durgati) of living beings. When the demon Mahishasura, made invincible to men by a boon from Brahma, conquered heaven, the dispossessed gods took refuge in Vishnu. Following Vishnu's command, from the combined radiance of all the gods was born the goddess Durga. Endowed with their strength and adorned with various weapons, she waged war and slew Mahishasura. The eternal battle between gods and demons symbolizes the struggle between good and evil. Though divine, the gods had become forgetful and thus fell into misery. Defeated by the demons, they lost heaven. Homeless, they wandered until they united and prayed for divine strength. From this, we learn the importance of unity—social harmony can be achieved only through the union of all forces of good, else evil will prevail. As for the origin of Durga Puja, the Puranas narrate that in ancient times, the dispossessed King Suratha and a merchant named Samadhi, betrayed by his own kin, visited the hermitage of the sage Medhas. On the sage's advice, they worshipped Goddess Durga. The pleased goddess granted their wishes. Since this worship took place in spring, it came to be known as Vasanti Puja. Texts like Kalika Purana, Devi Bhagavata, Maha Bhagavata, Brihannandikeshwara Purana, Kalivilas Tantra, Durgabhakti Tarangini, Durga Utsava Viveka, and Durga Utsava Tattva contain detailed accounts of Goddess Durga. According to Kritivasi Ramayana, Lord Rama worshipped Durga in autumn, out of season, before battling Ravana. This worship came to be called Akalbodhan or autumnal Durga Puja. Worship of the mother goddess existed

even among the world's most ancient peoples. Scholars believe that in the lands along the Mediterranean and in West Asia, mother-goddess worship was widespread. Archaeological finds from the Indus Valley Civilization suggest that in pre-Aryan India too, the cult of the mother goddess was prominent. Such worship was not limited to the Indus Valley; in the Black Sea region and the Danube Valley, too, mother goddesses were worshipped through idols. According to Professor Hansnarayan Bhattacharya, "Many scholars believe Hindu Shakti worship originated among non-Aryans. Some think it goes back to the Stone Age. In Europe, Venus figurines have been unearthed from prehistoric times. Images of mother figures with husband and children also attest to such worship. In Syria, Asia Minor, Palestine, Cyprus, Crete, and Egypt, similar figures have been found. According to Marshall, the vast land from the Nile to the Indus was the field of mother-goddess worship." (Hinduder Debadebi: Udbhav O Kramabikash, Part III, p.160) In Bengal, Durga Puja is celebrated in the most beautiful season of the year, autumn, when nature is serene and radiant. The clear blue sky, golden sunshine, and lush earth itself prepare for the worship of the Mother of the Universe. At this time, clay artists labor day and night to shape the goddess into her earthen form; markets overflow with goods for joyous buyers; migrant workers await reunion with loved ones. At last, on the auspicious sixth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Ashwin, Mother Durga appears before her children as the benevolent Mother. Her arrival inspires us to awaken our inner strength. Mother worship demonstrates how people, through collective effort, can

build society together. By conquering the demonic forces of life, humans—through strength, courage, and work—can rise to the peak of progress in industry, trade, agriculture, governance, and prosperity. To reach such heights, many adversities arise; it is Durga, the destroyer of distress, who rescues the afflicted. During the battle of Kurukshetra, Arjuna, at Krishna's advice, worshipped Durga for victory. In Kritivasi Ramayana, Rama too performed Durga Puja, offering 108 blue lotuses to seek her blessings in his battle against Ravana. Thus, worship of the Mother is meant to awaken auspicious strength and protect us from danger. That is why we often say, "Durga, Durga," when setting out. The Mother is not confined to temples or idols; she is as present in human dwellings as in sanctuaries. All are her children. This is why, in Durga worship, earth is collected not only from holy places but even from brothels—symbolizing that she belongs to all. Our country is one of festivals—"thirteen festivals in twelve months." Once, people found happiness in festivals, forgetting their daily sorrows. In everyday life, man is small, lonely, and weak—but during festivals he becomes vast, united with all, feeling the great strength of shared humanity. Mother is known by countless names

among her devotees:

Mahishasuramardini, Katyayani, Shivani, Bhavani, Adyashakti, Chandī, Shatakshi, Durga, Uma, Gauri, Sati, Rudrani, Kalyani, Ambika, Adrija. She is worshipped as the supreme Nature herself, especially in Indian and Bengali society. In other parts of India, she is worshipped under different names: Amba and Ambika in Kashmir and the Deccan, Hingula and Rudrani in Gujarat, Kalyani in Kanauj, Uma in Mithila, Kumari in Kanyakumari. According to the Purana, King Suratha worshipped Durga in spring to regain his lost kingdom—hence Vasanti Puja. Rama worshipped her in autumn, before his battle with Ravana—hence Akalbodhan. Since then, autumnal Durga Puja has become the more prominent form. In the Mahabharata,

it is said that Yudhishthira, too, worshipped Durga for deliverance from calamities and for restoration of his kingdom. In every instance, worship of the goddess is linked to victory in battle and rescue from adversity. Thus, Durga is the granter of victory and the destroyer of misfortune. Worshipping her with devotion brings peace, she grants worldly joys and eternal liberation. We all desire peace, and may all attain it. May Durga Puja awaken the spirit of humanity in our hearts—filling them with love, affection, and compassion. Sadly, however, the true teachings of Durga Puja—unity, renunciation, and humanity—are being forgotten today. Religion is misused, worship commercialized, festivals turned into displays of luxury. In such times, we pray to the Goddess: O Mother of Strength, grant us courage, devotion, and love, so that we may build a beautiful and harmonious society.



It's essential to embrace modernity while staying rooted in our culture, traditions: Aparajita Adhya

While my on-screen roles have been vibrant, I have always cherished being even more colorful in my personal life, the actress said.

"As an actress, I consider cinema to be my true foundation. Through the wide range of characters I have portrayed, my foremost aim has always been to find a place in the hearts of the audience. For the past 36 years, I have consistently tried to reinvent myself to meet the demands of different roles on screen. Whenever viewers have connected with me in any character, they have showered me with love and appreciation. I believe that as an actress, this remains my greatest achievement. Over the years, I have acted in more than 65 films and have been honored with numerous awards, all thanks to my audience. While my on-screen roles have been vibrant, I have always cherished being even more colorful in my personal life. I am deeply grateful to all the directors who have trusted my craft and envisioned me in varied roles across films. Just as I devote myself with care to every character I play, I give equal importance to nurturing my personal life. In today's world, I believe it is essential to embrace modernity while staying rooted in our culture and traditions. Durga Puja, the most beloved festival of Bengalis, is also very close to my heart. From the first day of the festival to Dashami, I personally organize daily rituals at home. I love preparing everything with my own hands and celebrating by giving gifts to my family members. No matter how busy my professional schedule gets, I always make time for myself, my family, and the festivities, balancing it all as part of my way of life. Though the celebrations of my childhood Puja and those of today are vastly different, I continue to give utmost priority to my emotional bond with the festival. Currently, apart from Bengali cinema, I am also exploring diverse roles in Hindi films. I hope my audience will continue to shower me with love and blessings as they see me in new dimensions on screen."



The Blue Paper Boat

Md. Yousof Alam

It was the last evening of the month April, slipping quietly into dusk. Mirik was cloaked in a majestic robe of black clouds that hovered over the lush, emerald tea gardens, painting the landscape with strokes of mystery and wonder. The air was thick with the scent of wet earth and fresh tea leaves, while distant hills wrapped in mist added an ethereal charm. The gentle rustling of the leaves and the occasional birdsong formed a haunting symphony that enchanted every visitor's soul. Mirik, ever the enchanting host, revealed new hues of beauty with every glance, whispering secrets of nature's timeless dance. A weary cloud dragged its final strength homeward, while flocks of birds crowded their nests in playful chatter. The breeze, tender and inevitable, handed over leaves to their fated fall, swaying gently before surrendering to the earth. From a nearby tea garden workers' colony, the faint notes of John Denver's song, Sunshine on My Shoulders, drifted into Ishan's ears, carried softly by the wind. That song had always been special to them—both his and Nargis's favourite. They both love country music. They always go out to the villages, away from the rush of the city, whenever they get time. Somehow, this song connected their inner worlds, weaving memories of childhood, first attempts at poetry, and the fragile dreams of growing up. Their love, much like a hand-knit sweater—twisted yet warm—was not their first, but perhaps their most real. In every line of that song, they found a reflection of their shared pasts, and in being together they had begun to learn the spelling of love anew. They both regarded each other as their sunshine who made them happy in colder phases of life, every time and everywhere. The wind tangled strands of Nargis's hair across Ishan's face. He made no effort to move them away. On the contrary, he longed to bury his face in those strands and breathe in their fragrance—his small escape into an ocean of love. Living in that moment was his priority at that romantic time. Theirs was not a love that sought attention.

It was ordinary, quiet, tucked away from the world's gaze. Having grown increasingly fond of each other's companionship, they cared little for time's hurried ticking. Marriage, with its hardships and demands, still felt like distant shores. Instead, their moments were woven with little quarrels, stubborn wishes, experiments with food, endless conversations ranging from history to geopolitics, and occasional walks under the sky. Yet sometimes, deep in thought, Ishan worried about what lay ahead. He carried responsibilities too heavy for his young shoulders—responsibilities born of a childhood marked by his mother's tears, neglect from relatives, and his father's failed ventures. Unlike Nargis, who, as the only child of doting parents, learned to carry sorrow with quiet grace, Ishan's world had always taught him constraint. Religion was never the problem. Society and Nargis's conservative Muslim family were. He had never seen humanity triumph over divisions in real life—only in stories and films. To him, life looked like a stage where no rehearsal was allowed. Each act was final, each mistake irredeemable. Still, he dreamt of change—not alone, but hand in hand with Nargis. That evening, under the cloudy skies, sitting on damp grass with birdsong all around, Ishan turned to her and said, almost absurdly, "You know... I am a paper boat." Nargis had heard such whimsical things from him before. Sometimes they amused her. Sometimes she replied with a teasing "Seriously?" But today, resting her head on his shoulder, she whispered softly, "Explain." And so he did, his words slow and winding, as though carried by a mountain train. "A paper boat... that's me. I am that blue envelope of one of the love letters, once forgotten in a box. Like an absentminded lover who hides what she treasures most and forgets the hiding place, I too was forgotten for years. Until you came. You took that blue envelope with your own hands, gave it the shape of a paper boat, and set it afloat

with your touch. You breathed life into something torn, something no one thought could be mended. This boat—this fragile creation—is now yours alone. You can keep it beside your bed, by your alarm clock, glance at it every morning and night, touch it when you wish. As long as you care for it, I will remain. Or..." He paused. Nargis tilted her face toward him. "Or?" "Or one day," he continued, voice after now, "as dark clouds scatter rain over your home, water rushing down tin roofs will pool into a fleeting river at your doorstep. You might place my blue paper boat upon it, watch it drift helplessly away—glancing back, perhaps, but unable to return. Slowly it will sink, torn under raindrops and the current's force. Lost forever. Beyond repair." He smiled faintly then, exhaling like a man emptying his soul. Just as Nargis began to respond, aindrops fell from the sky. Ishan, unwilling to spoil the moment with too many words, took her hand, pulled her up, and said, "Come. Let's get drenched together." She switched off her phone, tucked it in her bag, smoothed his hair fondly, and walked alongside him. In the vast tea gardens, they strolled through rain-soaked paths hand in hand, like two ducks paddling through a pond dense with azolla. He would not let go of her hand, not for an instant. Today, the rain had etched new colours into the diary of their love. But the downpour did not last. Just before sunset, the western horizon burst open with scattered rays, painting the clouds with lost light. It was a reminder—life may often be shadowed, but the longing for brightness endures. That day, they didn't get to sing together in the rain. The storm left midway, almost playfully, as though it too didn't want to drown Ishan's tender heart. Instead, it drew half a rainbow across the fading sky—like an unfinished promise. And among those clouds, Ishan lingered still, carrying with him both the fragility and resilience of a paper boat.

Sadhwi Majumder Weaving Stories in Dance



Agartala's own multifaceted artist **Sadhwi Majumder** — actor, dancer, choreographer, poet — opens up in a candid conversation with **Prasenjit Chakraborty**. From her early days at Holy Cross School to winning a National Scholarship in Bharatanatyam, and from gracing national television to performing on prestigious global stages, Sadhwi's journey has been one of passion, discipline, and storytelling. In this interview, she reflects on her roots, her inspirations, fashion and the art of weaving life into performance.

Before entering in to the formal interview, she spoke about her journey: I like to call myself a storyteller — an actor, dancer, choreographer, and poet. I was born and brought up in Agartala, schooled at Holy Cross School. An integral part of my current journey, I will forever be grateful to my teachers and administrators because they believed in me even before I did. I was awarded a National Scholarship in Bharatanatyam by CCRT, Govt of India. Later, I studied Psychology at Mumbai University with minors in Economics and Sociology.

Bharatanatyam is my foundation, but I've also explored Kathak, Manipuri, Odissi, and a myriad of other contemporary styles. My career has taken me to national platforms like India's Best Dancer and Dance India Dance, films like Shyam Singha Roy, and television series such as Sapno Ki Chhalang and Prithviraj Chauhan. I've also had the privilege of choreographing eminent artists of our country, including Hema Malini, Madhuri Dixit, Jacqueline Fernandez, and many others. My favorite, though, has been musical theatre — I've been touring some of the most prestigious stages around the world for the past eight years. One of the highlights of my career has been playing the lead role of Paro in a Broadway-style rendition of Devdas, which most recently staged in Paris in the oldest theatre in Europe, La Grand Rex.

Art is something I've inherited from my family. My mother, Tapati Bhowmik, is a painter and National Award winner, and the primary reason of my being as an artist. My grandfather, Ranjit Kr. Bhowmik, was also a revered artist and theatre actor from Tripura. I never got the chance to meet him, but I believe he still lives vicariously through both my mother and me.

My father, Subrata Majumder, although not from an artistic background, has been a sportsman. And he has been my biggest fan since day one. He has supported me in every decision I've taken — even in moments when he didn't fully understand my reasons. I think that is the greatest support any child can receive from their parents, and I carry that strength with me always.

While scholarships and formal education gave me structure, I believe my truest learning has come from every stage, every collaboration, and every story I've been fortunate to live and tell through my art.

Q: Dance is often called the "language of the soul." What does it mean to you personally?

I started dancing when I was 2 and a half. So, dance, to me, was never just movement — it was a way of life. It's where my emotions, my memories, and even my silences find expression. Through dance, I feel connected to something far greater than myself — to love, to nature, to stories that are timeless. Every gesture, every rhythm, carries a piece of my truth. It's both my prayer and my freedom, a place where vulnerability transforms into strength, and where I find the purest version of myself.

Q: Do you see dance as discipline, expression, or spirituality—or a blend of all three?

For me, dance is all three — discipline, expression, and spirituality — woven together like threads of the same fabric. The discipline keeps me grounded, shaping my body and mind with consistency and rigor. Expression allows me to release what words can't hold, giving form to emotions and stories that live within me. Finally, spirituality is what completes it — that quiet surrender, that sense of being a vessel through which something larger flows. Without discipline, I wouldn't have the strength; without expression, I wouldn't have the voice; without spirituality, I wouldn't have the soul.

Q: What is the most challenging dance form you've tried, and what did it teach you?

The most challenging dance form I've tried is Bharatanatyam itself. People often see its beauty, but behind that grace lies a discipline that constantly tests your stamina, your patience, and your ability to embody precision and emotion at once. I always say being effortless takes the most amount of effort. Learning it taught me

humility — that no matter how much you think you know, the art will always demand more from you. Every araimandi that burns your thighs, every mudra that refuses to sit perfectly, every abhinaya that feels just out of reach — they all remind you that learning is a lifelong journey. It taught me resilience, respect for tradition, and the truth that mastery isn't about perfection, but about surrendering yourself to the process again and again.

Q: How do you prepare mentally and emotionally before a performance?

Before a performance, I always take a moment to touch the stage and ask it to handle me. It's my way of surrendering — of acknowledging that the stage is sacred, and that I'm only a vessel for what needs to flow through. I center myself with breath, quiet my mind, and let the emotions of the piece sink into me. By the time I rise, it feels less like I'm about to perform and more like I'm about to offer. That small ritual reminds me that I'm not carrying the weight alone — the stage holds me, the art guides me, and my only job is to be true.

Q: Dance evolves with culture—how do you strike a balance between tradition and modernity?

For me, tradition and modernity are not opposites — they are companions. Tradition gives me my roots: the boundaries, the vocabulary, the timeless stories that anchor me. Modernity gives me wings: the freedom to experiment, to respond to the world I live today, to let the art breathe. I choreograph or perform, I don't see it as "mixing" them to converse — letting and the imagination of the dialogue, dance evolves, loses its soul.

Q: Can you share a moment when it turned into healing or self-discovery?

I was about six or seven, performing in the old outside stage of Rabindra

While scholarships and formal education gave me structure, I believe my truest learning has come from every stage, every collaboration, and every story I've been fortunate to live and tell through my art, says Sadhwi.

Bhavan, Agartala. The stage had cracks running through it. In the middle of my dance, my foot got stuck in one of those cracks, and it tore open. Blood started pouring, but I didn't stop. I kept moving, finishing every step, every beat. For me, in that moment, the performance wasn't about winning or losing — it was about respect. Respect for the stage, for the art, for the story I was telling. Stopping midway felt like breaking that bond.

By the time I finished, the blood had already spread across the floor. One of the judges, an elderly man, came running onto the stage. He lifted me in his arms and rushed me straight to the emergency room. I can still remember the panic in everyone's eyes, but for me, there was only calm — because I knew I had given myself fully to the dance. That moment changed something in me. It taught me that dance isn't about comfort or perfection — it's about surrender. Even in pain, I felt alive, as if the art itself was holding me. Looking back, I realize that was the first time dance became more than performance. It became resilience, healing, and self-discovery.

Q: Do you feel dancers are storytellers as much as actors? How do you bring narrative into movement?

Absolutely — dancers are storytellers just as much as actors, maybe even more in some ways, because we tell without words. I call myself a storyteller for the very reason. Every gesture, every gaze, every pause carries meaning. To bring narrative into movement, I start by feeling the story in my own body first — letting the emotion, the character, and the context settle into my muscles and breath. Then, through rhythm, mudras, abhinaya, and space, I translate that inner experience outward. The goal isn't to act like the story, but to be the story, so the audience feels it as a living, breathing experience rather than just watching it unfold.

Q: As a model, how do you balance showcasing trends with preserving your individuality?

As a model, I see trends as tools, not rules. They can inspire and push me to experiment, but I never let them erase who I am. Coming from the Northeast, I feel a strong pull toward wearing Northeastern fabrics — they feel like home, like an extension of my identity. At the same time, my Bengali roots always shine through in unapologetic loud ways, in the drape of my saree, in the arc of my Kajal. Growing up wearing clothes designed by my mother, individuality was always a priority in my fashion language. Trends can be the catalyst, but my heritage and my personal story are the voice that tells my story.

Q: How do you see the relationship between fashion and confidence in your own journey?

For me, fashion is like dance — a language of the self. The fabrics I wear, the cuts, the colors, they all move with me, shaping how I hold space in the world. When I wear something that resonates with my roots or my individuality, it's like stepping onto a stage: I stand taller, breathe deeper. Confidence doesn't come from fitting in — it comes from letting what you wear become an extension of your soul, just as every movement in dance becomes an expression of who you are. Fashion, like dance, becomes a mirror reflecting not just style, but the courage to be wholly yourself.

Q: If you get the chance to design your own clothing line, what would be its signature element?

If I were to design my own clothing line, its signature element would be storytelling through fabric. I'm a big believer in maximalism — playing with colors is my favorite thing to do, so I can assure you my line would never be shy. Accessories would also play a big role; I feel a little naked without them, so each piece would be designed to allow space for personal styling. Beyond aesthetics, the clothes would carry a thread of my heritage — Northeastern weaves, Bengali influences and textures that feel alive with history.

Puja fashion is always traditional, Kolkata always first choice: Paoli Dam

The Durga Puja festival brings a unique energy to Kolkata. The city of joy wears a vibrant look with art, culture, and devotion taking the centre stage. As the sounds of the dhak drums fill the air, people come together to celebrate with unmatched enthusiasm. For actor Paoli Dam, a native of Kolkata, these five days are a cherished opportunity to reconnect with her roots, family, and friends.

In this special interview taken by Avishikta Lodh, Paoli opens up about her personal connection to the festival. She shares how she carves out time from her demanding schedule to return to her hometown and immerse herself in the festivities. She reminisces about her childhood memories of pandal hopping with cousins and the simple joy of wearing new clothes. Paoli also reveals her favorite aspects of the modern-day celebrations, from her love of traditional attire to her admiration for the creative minds behind the city's innovative pandals.

How do you like to spend the Durga Puja days amidst your busy schedule?

Paoli Dam: I don't plan anything in advance. I usually take it as it comes. Throughout the year, I keep going from one place to another for work. So, during Puja, I usually drop plans of spending Puja anywhere else apart from Kolkata unless I have a schedule for shooting during those special days. Mostly, it doesn't happen this way. So mostly I stay in Kolkata during the Puja days. During those five days, till Saptami we may have some work but on Ashtami, Nabami and Dashami, I spend time with my family and friends. In my building, a community Puja is organized. On the Ashtami Anjali, I stay there. On Nabami I meet friends and on Dashami I sleep. This year, I may miss Sindur Khela due to some work. I love Kolkata for its colourful celebrations of Puja.

Is there any particular childhood memory of Durga Puja that still makes you smile?

I grew up in a joint family. Me and my cousins used to go out for Puja hopping during the day time. Obviously, in places that are near the home. In the evening, we used to go out with the elders. Those were the times I really enjoyed. Pandal hopping, new clothes were some of the cherishable moments of my childhood. I miss those days. Today, most of my relatives are scattered here and there, not everyone is in Kolkata and no one can be in Kolkata during the Puja

days. Now the days are very different. **Your favourite Puja pandal in Kolkata?**



I am not particular about that. I am often invited for judging the best Pujas so I often visit all the best of the pandas of the city for evaluation. And, out of them what is fascinating for me is that the Puja organisers put a lot of thought behind designing a pandal. The artists involved also put their effort into creating something new for the visitors. I often get surprised at the intellect and talent behind those beautiful thought-provoking works which come into existence during Puja. And, every year some surprises come my way. Overall, I like the Puja pandas where creative thoughts come into play. The traditional way of Puja is also extremely attractive.

What is your preferred Puja attire?

For me Puja has to be traditional. I wear traditional Sarees during Puja. The Pujas are a little hotter in Kolkata because winter is a little late in this part of the country. So, I prefer traditional Sarees on that occasion. Puja fashion often involves a lot of handloom Sarees passed down from a few generations, so do you have a special piece from your mother's wardrobe or any family collection to wear during Durga Puja?

That has not been in my case. Not when it came to Saree. I grew up in a Bengali middle class family. In our family, there is a tradition of passing on jewelry. I have that. But, I myself have a big collection of Sarees. Wherever I travel, I have a good collection of Sarees. Even from the North East, I have collected Sarees.

Can you convey a special message for your fans from this part of the country?

When we are having this interview, I am a little down with the news of Zubeen Garg and we have been all mourning his untimely passing away. I believe legends never die. As an artist myself, we all live by our work. For me, an artist is successful when his or her work could etch a mark in the hearts of people. I hope people remember my work more than me as an individual. Puja is a very happy time and I wish everyone a very happy Puja.

Durga Puja, a chance to return to childhood joy: Biplab Goswami

On the eve of Durga Puja, we recently sat down with famed screenwriter and director Biplab Goswami to talk about what Durga Puja meant to him. Here's what he had to share:

What is Durga Puja to you?

Well, Durga Puja is a celebration that awakens joy in every heart it touches, filling every soul with life and light. And the best part about it is that Durga Puja is not just a regional festival; it has transcended state and linguistic boundaries to reach all across India. Its vibrancy and energy are felt throughout the entire country. To me, this is what Durga Puja is all about: the warmth and beauty of celebration and festivity that crosses barriers and differences.

How have you connected with the Durga Puja celebrations, especially as a professional whose work has taken him all across the country?

I must admit that after taking up filmmaking as a profession, I haven't been able to immerse myself in these festivities as I used to when I was younger. Yet, this is a festival that draws us to it. No matter where I am, what I'm doing, it pulls me in, like it does all those whose lives it has touched! There were a couple of times when I was in Mumbai during the Pujas, but my heart remained in my hometown of Agartala. Despite being a celebration of a particular community, it transcends differences in religion, community, and many of the so-called boxes we humans put ourselves in. This is what touches me the most about Durga Puja: that this festival brings together so many of us Indians, and to each of us, it feels like our very own, very personal celebration. Today, its reach has extended far beyond India. In many corners of the world, people of different races, cultures, and religious beliefs all join hands to take part in Durga Puja celebrations, and I am very proud of that as an Indian. In that sense, it is not just a festival of the goddess, but also a celebration of friendship, kinship, and unity.

Could you share with us some childhood memories related to Durga Puja?

Even before I had started going to school, I was swept up in the inimitable flavour of Durga Puja. The lanes and roads of Agartala would glow with magical lights, songs would float from every corner, and the pandals would come alive with Maa Durga presiding in all her splendour and glory. What I remember most vividly is the joy on everyone's faces: an infectious, unfiltered happiness that filled the air and touched every single person. Those early Pujas gave me a pure, childlike sense of wonder that I will always treasure. As I grew older, Durga Puja became more than just a festival; it turned into a celebration of togetherness and belonging. There was the laughter shared with friends, the thrill of exploring pandals, the warmth of time spent with family, and those long walks through the vibrant streets where every turn promised something new. Each day felt so full of possibilities that even twenty-four hours seemed too short to soak it all in. I remember the irresistible pull of the festivities. There was an urgency that made me want to visit every pandal or soak in the environment on the streets, no matter the weather. Even when it rained, I would call up friends, persuading them to step out, and if they weren't free, I would go alone happily. In fact, some of my fondest memories are of those solitary walks, where I felt completely immersed in the magic of the Puja. That boundless joy, that sense of wonder, those are the feelings I hold closest to my heart when I think of my childhood Durga Pujas.

As you grew older, did the experience of Durga Puja become different?

Of course, the experience changed, as all things in life do. When I

left Agartala to study filmmaking in Kolkata, Durga Puja became something else entirely. It evolved into a homecoming, with me returning every year. Those few days were about reunion: reunion with family, with familiar faces, with the lanes and bylanes I had grown up wandering. And along with all of that came the familiar comfort of belonging. In many ways, Durga Puja became my chance to return to that same childish joy, even if only for a short while.



And now, at this stage of your life, what do you feel when Durga Puja approaches?

Today, I may not feel the same childlike giddiness that once kept me wide-eyed through the nights, but the festival still stirs something just as powerful in me. Every year, as Durga Puja approaches, I feel a deep sense of warmth and anticipation. This warmth and anticipation are reminders that this is more than a festival. It is an occasion for us to come together, to celebrate what is best in us, and to embrace the spirit of unity and joy. As I see the simple smiles it brings to the faces of the young and the old alike, uniting different races by breaking down barriers, I feel even more certain that this is the kind of celebration we need to keep alive in our times.

Durga Puja through the eyes of Barun Chanda: A journey of memory, meaning, tradition

Rashmi Shil

As Bengal prepares for its beloved Durga Puja, Tripura Times spoke with acclaimed actor and cultural thinker Barun Chanda, best known for his role in Satyajit Ray's Seemabaddha. Drawing from a rich tapestry of personal memories—from Dhaka to North Calcutta—Chanda shared how the festival has evolved from intimate rituals to a grand cultural spectacle. Despite its transformation into a multi-crore industry, he believes Durga Puja still unites people across all walks of life. In a heartfelt conversation, Chanda touched on themes of fashion, faith, and the enduring beat of the dhak that continues to echo through Bengal's soul.

Q. Durga Puja is often described as the lifeblood of Bengali culture. How do you personally interpret its significance?

Durga Puja in Bengal is more than a festival—it's an emotion that transcends scale and tradition. Once rooted in deep religiosity, it has now grown into a multi-crore industry, sustaining countless livelihoods in just two months. Yet, beyond the commerce, its true magic lies in the joy it spreads across every layer of society. From anticipation to celebration, it's a timeless rhythm of faith, community, and shared happiness.

Q. From your childhood days to now, how have you seen the festival evolve in spirit and in scale?

My childhood memories of Durga Puja are faint

and fragmented, shaped by a nomadic life that kept us moving every few years due to my father's job. Born in Dhaka, I rarely experienced the warmth of festive gatherings or the vibrant spirit of Puja. Even in those early years, the celebrations were modest—overshadowed by the hardships of the 1942 famine. Later, in cities like Cuttack and Madhupur, the festival remained distant, never quite imprinting itself on my young mind. It was only during my adolescence at the Ramakrishna Mission hostel in Deoghar that Durga Puja began to resonate. Yet, even then, it was a quiet affair—more contemplative than celebratory, observed from within the stillness of hostel life.

Q. But we all know the deep connection of Ramakrishna Mission and Durga Puja.

What puzzles me is the absence of vivid memories of Durga Puja during my time at Deoghar, even within the spiritually rich atmosphere of the Ramakrishna Mission. Perhaps the celebrations were simple, rooted in quiet devotion rather than grandeur, which is why they left only a gentle trace on my mind.

Q. How did your experience of Durga Puja evolve once you entered professional life?

It was only after visiting Kolkata that I truly experienced the grandeur of Durga Puja. Yet, amid the city's dazzling public festivities, my heart found solace in the intimate household pujas of North Calcutta—where "Thakur Dalans" echoed with devotion, tradition, and



Puja are still intact in today's changing times?

Yes, I believe the spirit of communal harmony and cultural richness in Durga Puja remains strong, even as society evolves. In Bengal, the festival still unites people across faiths, with communities—including our Muslim brethren—joining in the celebrations. The sense of togetherness is profound, untouched by division, reflecting Bengal's timeless legacy of inclusivity and mutual respect.

Q. As someone admired for your dignified sense of style, how do you see the intersection of fashion and tradition during Durga Puja?

To me, Durga Puja is inseparable from traditional attire. Though fashion evolves constantly, the festival draws us back to our cultural roots. Women draped in graceful sarees and ethnic wear embody the elegance

familial warmth. Unlike the opulent Barowari celebrations, these gatherings felt deeply personal. For me, the soul of Durga Puja lives in quiet reverence, age-old rituals, and the joy of close-knit communities.

Q. Do you think the communal harmony and cultural essence of

of Bengali heritage. Western outfits fade into the background, as Puja instinctively invites a return to timeless styles—rich in grace, reverence, and tradition.

Q. What's your timeless style philosophy that you feel resonates most strongly with the Puja spirit?

My style philosophy during Durga Puja is rooted in authenticity and heartfelt connection. I believe the festival's true spirit thrives in villages and old zamindari homes—where rituals are steeped in devotion, and the air hums with dhak beats, festive aromas, and communal warmth. There's a graceful rhythm to it all, with women leading preparations and every soul contributing. It's not about grandeur, but about shared joy. Even kolakoli—the embrace after Dashami—feels sacred, dissolving all barriers. That, to me, is the essence of Puja: tradition wrapped in tenderness, and style shaped by sincerity.

Q. Your performance in Seemabaddha remains a landmark in Indian cinema. How did Satyajit Ray's guidance influence you as an artist and an individual?

'Seemabaddha' was a defining moment—an artistic awakening that reshaped my journey. Working under Satyajit Ray's masterful direction left a lasting impact, and though the acclaim was immense, I chose to retreat from the spotlight for nearly two decades. That silence gave rise to

a quiet mystique; I was seen as an outsider who arrived, left an impression, and disappeared. It wasn't due to a lack of offers—I had many, some promising stardom. But I never chased fame; I sought depth in craft over celebrity. Even now, I remain discerning, valuing roles that speak to integrity and artistic truth.

Q. Looking back, do you see a cultural parallel between your cinematic journey and the celebratory essence of Durga Puja?

Not at all—they belong to entirely different worlds. Cinema is a crafted art, shaped by scripts and vision, while Durga Puja is a spontaneous celebration of tradition, emotion, and spiritual unity. One is a personal creative journey; the other, a collective cultural heartbeat. They stir different feelings and fulfill different roles in life. As our conversation with Barun Chanda concludes, his reflections on Durga Puja, tradition, and artistry reveal a life steeped in experience and quiet wisdom. From village rituals to cinematic milestones, his words blend nostalgia with cultural depth. In a fast-paced world, Chanda champions sincerity—whether in celebration or creative pursuit. For him, Durga Puja is not merely a festival, but a soulful rhythm, a return to roots. His journey is a tribute to the timeless beauty of simplicity, grace, and genuine connection.

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BARIR PUJA

124 YEARS OF DEVOTION From Sylhet to Agartala, Our Ancestral *Durga Puja*

Rageswari Dhar

There is a saying among Bengalis, "The days from Mahalaya to Panchami are the sweetest, because the excitement of Pujo asche still lingers. But once Shashti arrives, within the blink of an eye it is Dashami, and everything feels over, only another long year of waiting begins."

For us Bengalis, Durga Puja is not just a festival, it is the very rhythm of our existence. The moment Maa leaves, we begin yearning for her return, counting the days, waiting with a heart full of longing. When she finally arrives, that year-long wait bursts into joy, celebration, and surrender. Durga Puja begins with the stirring recitation of Mahishasuramardini in the immortal voice of Birendra Krishna Bhadra, and with the gentle call of Maayer Agomoni, even life itself beats louder. October skies turn brighter, shiuli flowers spread their fragrance like a sacred carpet, and the soft rustle of kash phool swaying in the fields seems to prepare the path for her homecoming.

This season of Ashwin is a season of awakening. The distant rhythm of the dhak feels like a heartbeat calling us back to her embrace. And this year, my family enters the 124th year of our Durga Puja, a legacy born from the devotion of my ancestor, late Rajani Kumar Debroy. Three generations ago, Maa herself appeared to him in a dream, asking him to begin this Puja. From that divine moment,

the seed of worship was sown in our family, and it has never ceased since.

My grandmother, Smt. Laxmirani Dhar, daughter of Rajani Kumar Debroy, is now 78. She has dedicated her life to preserving this Puja and is the living memory of this heritage. From childhood, I have grown up listening to her stories, glowing with reverence and warmth. Today, she, along with her brothers, Shiba Pada Debroy, Shankar Debroy, late Shambhu Pada Debroy, and Shakti Pada Debroy, stands as a guardian of this sacred tradition, ensuring

that the flame of devotion never fades, even as the world changes around us. The journey was not always easy. In 1965, during the turbulence of partition, our family left Sylhet district, Habiganj, Kamalanagar village, and began life anew in Nabanagar Gram, Kalagachiya, Agartala. Even in those times of hardship, Maa was never left behind. Some years we performed ghot puja with only a symbolic pot, other years we had full idols, but the devotion never faltered. This year is my 26th Puja here. Since birth, I have grown with its every ritual. As a child, I watched with wide eyes, the curling smoke of incense, the conch shell breaking the silence of dawn. Today, I understand the depth of each mantra, each offering, each gesture

of surrender. Our elders, now in their seventies and eighties, still lead the rituals with undying faith. Their wrinkled hands folded in prayer, their voices are reminders that without their devotion, this Puja would not have lived through 124 years. Every offering from bhog, prasad, the daily 108 lotuses at Maa's feet, everything becomes more than a ritual. They are symbols of love, sacrifice, and surrender. Behind them are silent fasts, long hours of unseen preparation, and the quiet devotion of a family bound together by faith. Bringing Maa home each year is like an emotional procession. The golden sunlight falls on her face as the idol travels through the fields, the dhak beats, dhuno fills the air, and kash phool bends in the breeze as if bowing in welcome. When she enters our home, the women of our family greet her with ulu, as though welcoming a beloved daughter after a long journey. Though her idol's design remains unchanged year after year, she appears more beautiful every time. In the past, all her jewellery and weapons were crafted from clay, but today we use readymade ornaments. Yet her face remains the same every year, those eyes, sometimes tender, sometimes fierce, reminding us that she is both comfort and strength.

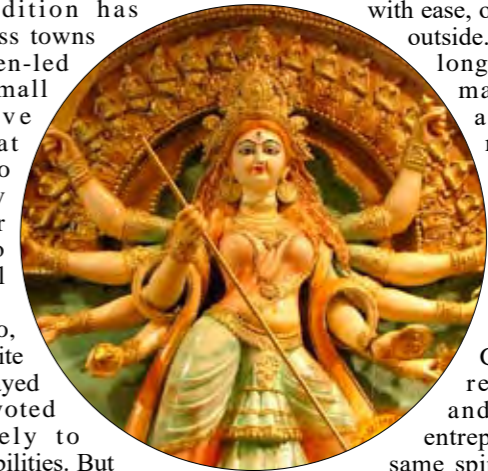


The Rise of Women Entrepreneurs: A New Face of Durga Puja

Poulami Ghosh

In earlier days, Durga Puja shopping meant a trip to the local markets. Many still remember accompanying their mothers as they carefully chose sarees and dress materials from crowded shops. The festive season was incomplete without those visits. Today, that tradition has transformed. Across towns and cities, women-led boutiques and small businesses have flourished. What was once limited to big shops is now available at our doorstep, thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit of women. A few decades ago, many women, despite being educated, stayed at home and devoted themselves solely to household responsibilities. But the picture has changed remarkably. Now, nearly 70% of women are engaged in earning an income—whether by running boutiques, stitching blouses, managing beauty salons, opening small restaurants, or pursuing other ventures. This shift is not only a sign of economic growth but also a reflection of true women

empowerment. Many of these women balance household chores with their businesses, proving that determination and hard work can create opportunities even from home. For customers, this has brought unparalleled convenience. Sarees, dress materials, and festive outfits can now be purchased with ease, often without stepping outside. What once required long hours in crowded markets can now be accomplished in minutes, bringing both comfort to buyers and livelihood to sellers. As Durga Puja approaches, it is important to recognize these women. Just as Goddess Durga represents strength and resilience, these entrepreneurs embody the same spirit in their everyday lives. They work tirelessly, day and night, to support their families while also making festive shopping effortless for others. This Durga Puja, let us salute these women entrepreneurs, who stand as symbols of independence, dedication, and the changing face of society.



The Red Frock

Md Yousof Alam

It was the autumn of 2010. Asha was 10, a lively girl from a joint family in a sleepy village of Sonamrupa Subdivision. She spent her days playing hide-and-seek, hopscotch, running wild with her cousins, catching fish, and letting the laughter of childhood echo through paddy fields and bamboo groves. That year Durga Puja was knocking on the door, and the air was heavy with the scent of Shiuli flowers. The village markets heaved with people buying new clothes, the sound of conch shells and dhaak rehearsals floating with the autumn breeze. For little Asha, this was the happiest time of the year. On the rainy afternoon of Panchami, she went with her aunt to town and returned with something she had long wished for—her first red frock. Beaming with joy, bag in hand, she walked home from her aunt's house at dusk. She knew the road well. The rain had just stopped, and the muddy path glistened under the fading sun. But the path cut dangerously close to the village cremation ground—a place both feared and avoided. Here, some castes of Hindus burned their dead while others buried them. Half-charred bamboo bier ashes lay beside rows of raised graves. The air always smelled faintly of smoke and decay. That evening it was worse. The croaking of frogs and the shrill cry of crickets filled the half-darkness as Asha skipped

past cheerfully. Then she froze. A grave had caved in due to the rain, leaving a hollow gap. From it, something impossible emerged. A fireball. Glowing, pulsating, hovering in the damp air. Asha's tiny hands tightened on the red frock's bag. Her legs refused to move. Something within the fireball tugged at her mind. It was not light—it was a command. A call. She wanted to run, but her body betrayed her. Her feet dragged closer to the grave, as if invisible threads yanked her forward. The sound of insects grew deafening, the trees seemed to lean closer, and the last orange streaks of sunlight disappeared from the sky. Asha's mind screamed No! but her lips trembled in silence. She was inches away, her small fingers rising as though to touch the fiery orb. Then... From a nearby mosque, the evening Azaan broke the night. Its echo sliced through her trance. The fireball quivered, hissed like poured oil, and shrank back into the grave's blackness. Asha collapsed on the muddy path, clutching her frock, sobbing in terror before sprinting home. She never told anyone. Some memories rot better when sealed. But the bag containing the red frock was left behind. Later, many times in life, she crossed that path—but nothing like this ever happened again. Seventeen years passed. Now 27, Asha had left her native village for the city. Newly married and settling down. The terror

of childhood nothing more than a frayed corner of memory. She is living a new life, new place, and new duties filled her days with joy and fulfilments. Now Sarees replaced frocks. But in the autumn of another Durga Puja, as rain lashed against the glass walls of a glittering city mall, Asha strolled beside her husband, her saree brushing the polished floor. Then she stopped—breath caught, blood gone cold. There. Hanging on a glossy rack under the white glow of spotlights. A red frock. Not just any red frock—the very same shade, the very same cut—that had once dangled from her trembling hands on that dreadful Panchami evening of her childhood. The crowd bustled past, laughter echoed, raindrops traced silver on the glass. Yet for Asha, the world had fallen silent. The fabric seemed to pulse with memory, gleaming wet as if still carrying the stormsoaked night from the village path. Asha's heart slammed in her chest. Her husband called her name, but she didn't answer. She stepped closer, trembling. On the fabric's hemline clung a speck of dried mud, like the dark village soil. Her hand trembled forward—then her reflection in the mirror shifted. Not her face. Something else flickered behind her. A burned, eyeless child draped in a tattered red frock, clutching a floating fireball. Asha blinked once. And this time, no Azaan came to pull her away.

SHAKTI RISING Tripura's Saptami Symphony of Women and Durga

Jeet Bhattacharya

On the auspicious day of Maha Saptami, Tripura joins the rest of the country in welcoming Maa Durga into our lives with devotion, joy, and grandeur. Saptami marks the beginning of the goddess's divine journey of courage and compassion. It is a day that celebrates not only faith, but also the eternal power of women—their ability to nurture, to lead, and to inspire progress. Maa Durga, with her ten arms and calm grace, represents the many roles that women play in society. She is a protector, a creator, a guide, and a symbol of wisdom. Each weapon in her hand reflects the tools of empowerment—knowledge, confidence, resilience, and unity. Her story reminds us that true strength comes when determination meets compassion, and when collective energy is harnessed for prosperity. Tripura, known for its harmony of tribal and non-tribal traditions, has always celebrated feminine energy. In indigenous folklore, the mother goddess is revered as the sustainer of life, while in Durga Puja, celebrated in every town and village, she is worshipped as the embodiment of courage and prosperity. Agartala's grand pandals, Udaipur's artistic celebrations, and the spirited festivities in rural areas reflect Tripura's cultural unity. The fragrance of shiuli flowers, the rhythm of dhak, and the artistry of local craftsmen and women together create an atmosphere where devotion and creativity merge. Women play a central role in these celebrations—organizing events, leading cultural performances, and carrying forward the traditions with pride.

Today, Tripura is witnessing a new chapter of growth led by its women. With high literacy levels and expanding opportunities, women are contributing significantly to education, healthcare, arts, entrepreneurship, and governance. From classrooms to cultural stages, from self-help groups to start-ups, they are making their mark with confidence. In rural Tripura, self-help groups run by women are driving

prosperity through handloom, handicrafts, and eco-friendly enterprises. In urban spaces, women are emerging as professionals, artists, and innovators,



adding new energy to the state's development journey. Like Maa Durga's many arms, they balance family, work, and community with strength and grace. Maha Saptami is not only about rituals like Nabapatika Snan or the lighting of lamps. It is a reminder that women are the torchbearers of progress. The plants worshipped during the rituals symbolize fertility, prosperity, and abundance—the same qualities women bring to families and societies. In Tripura's pandals, the participation of women in music, dance, recitations, and social initiatives reflects how empowerment is celebrated in real life. Every cultural program, every artistic display, and every act of leadership by women during Durga Puja is a living tribute to the goddess. As Maa Durga begins her divine journey on Saptami, she brings blessings of peace, harmony, and prosperity. Her presence reminds us that progress comes when we honor the strengths of women and allow their talents to flourish. A society that empowers its women becomes stronger, more compassionate, and

more prosperous. Tripura's growth story beautifully reflects this truth. From education to entrepreneurship, women are not only participating but also leading. The handloom weaver in a tribal hamlet, the teacher shaping young minds, the healthcare worker serving communities, and the entrepreneur building a new venture—all embody the spirit of Durga in their own unique ways. The essence of Saptami is action—the goddess prepares to bring peace and victory. Likewise, Tripura stands at a moment where women's empowerment is shaping the future. By nurturing talent, supporting innovation, and celebrating women's achievements, the state continues to build a foundation for inclusive prosperity. The path forward is one of unity—families, communities, and institutions walking together to ensure that every woman has the space to rise, shine, and contribute. Just as Maa Durga was empowered by the combined strength of the gods, women in Tripura draw strength from collective support and shared opportunities. "Every Woman is a Form of Durga" Maha Saptami is not only a ritual, but also a message. It tells us that Maa Durga is alive in every woman who dares to dream, who leads with courage, and who nurtures with love. This Saptami, as the sounds of dhak fill the air and the pandals of Tripura come alive with devotion, let us remember that the truest way to worship Maa Durga is to honor the women around us. Every daughter, sister, mother, and leader carries within her the same spirit of Shakti that we bow to in the goddess. By celebrating women's strength and achievements, Tripura is not only preserving its cultural essence but also lighting the path toward prosperity and progress. On this Maha Saptami, may Maa Durga bless our state with peace, unity, and empowerment, and may every woman continue to rise as a radiant symbol of Shakti.

A Train Journey Called Life

Life is like a journey by train,
You see sunshine, also rain.
Chugging along a winding track,
The train keeps moving, no going back.
It is all excitement at journey's start,
You come across people bright and smart.
Most are co-travelers for a short while.
Only a few give company till the last mile.
During the journey, you make new friends,
But, not everyone a helping hand lends.
It is a journey, whose future is unknown,
Each station you cross, older you have grown.
Birds and animals, you see outside,
In nature's lap, they have nothing to hide.
Inside the compartment, you feel suffocation,
But, wait you must till your destination.
Huffing and puffing, all along panting,
Names of Gods, throughout chanting.
A long whistle at the journey's end...
Does this poem any message send?

-Subhashis Mitra



Sancta Familia de Bengalialia

Beyond Rituals

Soham Majumder

The past few weeks saw a heated controversy erupt on X (formerly Twitter) over an image of Lord Shiva. The idol, crafted with a rotund belly and a homely air, was derided by some who are more accustomed to the sinewy, meditative figure of the Adiyogi. To them, the pot-bellied form looked irreverent, almost mocking. But for Bengalis, this was nothing strange. This was Shib Thakur, the beloved householder-god, simple, affectionate, a bit whimsical, and at home with his family—exactly the way Bengal has long imagined him.

This clash of perceptions is not just about aesthetics. It cuts to the heart of how deities are understood: either as remote cosmic principles or as kin. And nowhere is this contrast sharper than in the Bengali imagination of Goddess Durga. While Shakti across India is venerated as the fierce embodiment of feminine cosmic energy worthy of adulation, in Bengal she is something more intimate: Maa Durga, the daughter who comes home once a year.

The Origin

Historically, Durga Puja was a highly ritualistic event. Texts from the late medieval period prescribe elaborate worship to the goddess as Mahishasuramardini—the vanquisher of evil, the divine mother whose cosmic battle with the buffalo demon restored cosmic balance. Early pujas were often the preserve of minor royal houses of declining Mughal protectorates or wealthy zamindars emerging from the Permanent Settlement system of the East India Company, and were conducted with pomp, precision, and strictly Brahmanical rituals. But by the late 18th and early 19th centuries, change was afoot. In Kolkata, affluent households started organizing baroyari (community) pujas, inviting neighbors, relatives, and acquaintances. Soon, Durga was no longer just a fierce cosmic deity. She was welcomed into Bengali homes as a daughter returning to her maternal house with her children—Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik, and Ganesh—in tow. Traditionally, the entire tableau—Durga, her four children, their rides and the slain demon—was cast under a single overarching arch (chala), symbolizing familial unity. Unlike the more fearsome representations elsewhere, the Goddess here often has almond eyes, a serene smile, and a maternal grace, balancing ferocity with tenderness. Goddess Saraswati and Lakshmi are the beloved elder grandchildren while Lord Kartik is adored for boyish charm. Lord Ganesh gets the affection reserved for youngest grandchildren, a hint of plumpness and playfulness. Even the divine vahanas are tamed. In shastric tradition, Durga rode the lion, symbolizing raw power, courage, and the untamed forces of nature that she masters. However, in Bengal's artistic tradition, the lion often looks less like a ferocious jungle cat and more like a hybrid creature, sometimes closer to a horse with a mane and teeth painted on. The 16th and 17th century hereditary rural clay artisans (Kumors), unfamiliar with real lions, modelled Durga's vahana on animals they knew—horses. This gave rise to the stylized “folk lion,” a horse-like, chimerical form that has endured as a hallmark of the traditional Bengali Durga idol. Though most modern idols have zoologically accurate lions, it is often the endearing, even humorous Singha mama, which softens the terrifying imagery of the demon-slaying scene. Even the demon is domesticated. Mahishasura often appears less as a menacing villain and more as a mischievous, almost wayward but not irredeemable family member. On Dashami,



it is not uncommon to find his idol playfully stuffed with sweets.

This familial framing softened the image of the goddess. Her ten-armed battle posture with compendium of divine weapons remained, but it was tempered by affection in form and expression. The rituals became interwoven with songs, plays, poetry, and—most importantly—communal eating and socializing. The festival was transformed from a strictly religious act into a shared cultural celebration.



The Evolution

The Bengali imagination of Durga as a daughter is rooted in everyday social practice. In traditional households, a married daughter would return to her parental home during post-harvest autumnal vacations, bringing both joy and poignancy to the household. This longing and warmth were transposed onto the goddess herself. Durga, who resides in the remote Mount Kailash with Shiva, is imagined as coming back each year to her baaperbari (father's home), to spend a few fleeting days with her people.

This framing explains why Bengalis treat the festival with a kind of bittersweet joy. The

days of Shasthi to Dashami are festive, filled with laughter, cultural programs, and feasts. But on Vijaya Dashami, when the idol is immersed, there is weeping—mirroring the sorrow of seeing one's daughter depart again. The cosmic triumph of good over evil is acknowledged, yes, but what overwhelms the heart is the familial cycle of welcome and farewell. In this way, Durga Puja in eastern India became less about distant divinity and more about intimate kinship. It democratized worship, making it accessible beyond priestly precision. It also allowed art, literature, and performance to become central to the festival.

The Cuisine

One striking aspect of Durga Puja in Bengal is the role of food. Unlike in many Hindu traditions where vegetarianism is the rule during worship, Bengal maintains a different relationship with its Gods. The Goddess, seen as daughter, is offered what a family would naturally serve: rice, fish, meat, and sweets. Goat meat sacrificed in the temple courtyard becomes part of the bhog. Fish, a staple in Bengali households, often finds its way into festive meals. Even during community pujas, large feasts are organized where khichuri, labra, chutney, payesh, and occasionally meat dishes are distributed. The sacred and the everyday intermingled seamlessly.

For Bengalis, this practice does not diminish reverence. Rather, it heightens intimacy. Offering non-vegetarian food to the Goddess affirms that she is one of us, not distant from the rhythms of human appetite and delight. Durga is not to be appeased by austerity but honored through abundance and affection. In many family pujas, she is offered delicacies such as fish and meat from Shasthi to Navami. Yet, on the day of her departure, Goddess Durga is served humble pantabhaat, so that when her ascetic husband asks what she ate at her father's house, she can truthfully reply that it was only a simple meal. Such folklore help in humanising the divine. In the mrimoyeeroop of the idol shines the chinmayi essence of the daughter.

The Dilemma

The recent outrage over the Shiva idol reveals an underlying tension that is growing in contemporary culture. On one side is an attempt at homogenized, pan-Indian ideal of muscular, ascetic deities; whether it be the lean yogic Shiva or the six-pack Hanuman. On the other side are the residues of Bhakti movement, which prefers its Gods as family, with quirks, flaws, and humanity. Durga's daughterhood, Shiva's nomadic nature, Kartik's boyish charm, or Ganesh's playfulness—all these

soften divinity into kinship. They embody a worldview where gods are not remote archetypes but participants in the messiness of life. To impose a strict aesthetic or ritualistic purity on this tradition risks flattening its richness.

The Joy

Durga Puja today is more than worship—it is the heartbeat of eastern Indian cultural life. The artistry of pandals, the creativity of idol-makers, the poetry recitations, the theatre, the music, and above all the collective feasting create an atmosphere of shared joy. For diaspora, it is a link to home; for urban youth, it is a time of fashion, friendship and romance; for elders, it is a reminder of continuity and belonging. What makes the festival extraordinary is its ability to balance the sacred and the mundane. It is not just about the goddess slaying Mahishasura but about a community reaffirming its bonds through shared food, art, and laughter. As global fitness trends and muscular aesthetics infiltrate Indian cultural imagination, and as puritanical calls for stricter genuflection to rituals grow louder, one wonders what the future holds for Durga Puja. Will the daughterly Durga be overshadowed by the cosmic warrior Goddess? Will family intimacy give way to ritual precision and sculpted perfection? One hopes not. For it is the unique warmth of seeing Durga as daughter, the

willingness to feed her family food, the readiness to laugh and weep with her, that makes the Pujo so distinctive. This tradition does not diminish her cosmic power; it complements it with human tenderness. In a world increasingly obsessed with perfection, Durga Puja reminds us of the joy of imperfection, intimacy, and abundance. May this joy never be diminished, and may the daughter always find her way back home. Joy Maa Durga. Asche bochorbarhobe.



আমি ২০ বিয়ে নয়
পড়বে ভবিষ্যৎ

আর নয় কিশোরী গর্ভাবস্থা
নিজেও সচেতন হোন অন্যকেও সচেতন করান

কিশোরী গর্ভাবস্থার মারাত্মক ক্ষতিকর দিকঃ

- শিশুর জন্মগত ত্রুটি
- অকাল প্রসব-মা ও শিশুর জীবনের ঝুঁকি
- জরায়ুর ক্যান্সার ঝুঁকি
- প্রসব কালে প্রচণ্ড কাপনি প্রি-ক্ল্যাম্পসিয়া
- প্রসবোত্তর রক্তক্ষরণ (পিপিএইচ)
- রক্তা প্লতা
- কিশোরীর ভবিষ্যৎ খেমে যাওয়ার সম্ভাবনা
- অসুরক্ষিত গর্ভপাত ও সেপসিস সংক্রমণ

কিশোরী বয়সে গর্ভাবস্থা নয়।

কিশোরী গর্ভাবস্থা প্রতিরোধে পরিবার পরিকল্পনার বিভিন্ন পদ্ধতি গ্রহণ করা যেতে পারে। এই গুলি বিনামূল্যে সরকারী হাসপাতাল থেকে পাওয়া যায়।

জাতীয় স্বাস্থ্য শিক্ষা ও পরিবার কল্যাণ দপ্তর, মুম্বাই স্বাস্থ্য আধিকারিক, গোমতী জেলা, ত্রিপুরা



রাজ্যের সকল ভোক্তাদের প্রতি
ত্রিপুরা সরকারের আবেদন—

- প্যাকেটজাত দ্রব্য কেনার সময় প্যাকেটের গায়ে লেখা সামগ্রীর নাম, fssai লোগো, সর্বেচ্ছা খুচরো মূল্য, প্রকৃত ওজন/আয়তন/সংখ্যা, তৈরীর তারিখ, মেয়াদ পেরোনোর সময়, প্রস্তুতকারীর নাম ও ঠিকানা, ক্রেতা অভিযোগ কেন্দ্রের নাম ও ঠিকানা ইত্যাদি তথ্য ভালোভাবে যাচাই করে নেবেন।
- কোনো জিনিস কিনে কিংবা বিনিয়োগ, চিকিৎসা, বিমা, ব্যাঙ্ক, হাউজিং কনস্ট্রাকশন, ডাক, বিমান যেকোনো পরিষেবা নিয়ে কোনোভাবে প্রতারণিত হলে ক্রেতা সুরক্ষা আইন, ২০১৯ এর আওতায় সহজেই প্রতিকার পেতে পারেন।
- যেসকল দ্রব্য অহিনিত নিষিদ্ধ তাদের অন্য কোনো নামে বিক্রির জন্য কোনো ধরনের সরোগেট বিজ্ঞাপন করে বিভ্রান্ত করা ক্রেতা সুরক্ষা আইন, ২০১৯ অনুযায়ী, একটি অপরাধ। এধরনের কাজে লিপ্ত হলে বা এসংক্রান্ত কোনো অভিযোগ পাওয়া গেলে বিজ্ঞাপন দাতাকে আর্থিক জরিমানা করার আইনি বিধান রয়েছে।
- কোনো দ্রব্য বা পরিষেবা অনলাইন/টেলিপিং বা ডাইরেক্ট সেলিং কোম্পানীর কাছ থেকে কিনে প্রতারণিত হলে, ঘটনা যেখানেই ঘটে থাকুক, আপনি আপনার এলাকার ভোক্তা কমিশনে প্রতিকার চাইতে পারেন।
- দ্রব্য বা পরিষেবার মূল্য বাবদ প্রদত্ত অর্ধরাশি ৫০ লক্ষ টাকা পর্যন্ত জেলা ভোক্তা কমিশনে, ৫০ লক্ষ টাকার বেশী এবং ০২ কোটি টাকা পর্যন্ত রাজ্য ভোক্তা কমিশনে এবং ০২ কোটি টাকার বেশী হলে জাতীয় ভোক্তা কমিশনে সরাসরি বা অনলাইনে অভিযোগ জানাতে পারবেন।

সচেতন হউনঃ সুরক্ষিত থাকুন

ন্যাপসাল কমিশনের ওয়েবসাইট: ২৯১৫
ই-মার্কেটিং পোর্টাল: www.edaakti.tn.in
স্বাস্থ্য কমিশনের ওয়েবসাইট: ১৮০০-৩৪৫-৩৬৩৫

জাগ্রো প্রাইভেট লিমিটেড লোগো

ত্রিপুরা সরকারের খাদ্য, জনসংস্কার ও ক্রেতাস্বার্থ বিষয়ক দপ্তরের পক্ষ থেকে জনস্বার্থে প্রচারিত